

Patriot units exercise wartime defenses

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Army Spc. Oliver McLain, Delta Battery launcher crew member, secures an antenna during launcher set up.

In one of the largest U.S. and Republic of Korea exercises in the past 10 years Kunsan's own Soldiers did their part in training to defend the peninsula throughout the month of March.

Charlie and Delta Patriot Missile Batteries from 2-1 Air Defense Artillery recently participated in a peninsula-wide series of training exercises that focused on their wartime missions.

The Patriot systems' training evaluators focused on the batteries' ability to meet the mission requirements of the long-range, all-weather defense system designed to counter tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and advanced aircraft.

Army Pfc. Michael Matthie, Delta Battery radar crew member, put the mission in its simplest terms, "We defend the air bases and make sure they can go out and fight the fight."

Delta Battery took the lead role in the movement portion of the training evaluation, so they actually convoyed to a bare-base site. Convoy operations are slow and lumbering, with an average speed of about 30 m.p.h., but this was the second time Delta has practiced this portion of the training.

"We cut our convoy time down by about two hours," said Army Capt. Vidal Chavez, Delta's commander, and this set the tone for the rest of their training. "This [training] is important to the battery because it not only tests our abilities, but also gives us a chance to prove that we can conduct this mission in a remote location."

This realistic training kept Delta Battery in the field for more than 25 days. There they

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spent the days living and working in tents in the most austere field conditions at their wartime location.

"The realism helps in case we have to do this, because this is exactly how we would do it," said Capt. Chavez. "Realistically, we train as we fight and we fight like we train, so the soldiers can have the real feel of the battlefield; [Things like] how long it takes to get to a location, how long it takes to get in place and how long it takes to place a system and get ready to fight."

Their training covered every aspect of their mission, and they were tested in several phases. Evaluators looked at how fast and accurately the Patriot batteries could break down equipment, travel to another location and quickly stand up operations.

"This training helps us work together because we're doing our job; we're doing what we are supposed to do in combat. It gets us ready in case we do have to go to combat. It's familiarity," said Pfc. Matthie.

Living and working in those conditions brings out the fatigue associated with actual combat, and the evaluators kept the tempo high by continually tossing simulated ground attacks at the site to ensure Delta was capable of repelling forces and keeping friendly forces safe.

"The most significant challenge we face is reacting to the evaluator's tasks that they give us," said Capt. Chavez. "Every input is announced and will keep us on our toes. They want to see how we react to them."

Charlie Batteries' portion of this exercise included many of the same things as Delta, but Charlie was required to maintain the real-world mission for Kunsan during this training.

"Our Soldiers did an outstanding job preparing for and executing this mission," said Army Capt. Henry Bennett, Charlie Battery commander.

They did however live at their tactical location and even conducted a middle of the night tear down, convoy and set up for evaluators. Charlie Battery finished these three main parts, known in the Patriot world as a Table XII, in the allotted time limit with only minimal findings.



Army Pfc. Joseph Jones, Charlie Battery, checks for leaks and unserviceable equipment March 9. These checks play a key role in preventing breakdowns during convoys.

"This is our job; to shoot, move and communicate," said Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Swanson, Charlie Battery.

Charlie conducted a night convoy for training that tested their communications skills and grace under pressure.

"It is not only by the light of day that we demonstrate our knowledge of the Patriot air mission, but we also move during the night when it is most favorable to counterattack the enemy," said Army 1st Lt. Jose Torres, Charlie Battery launcher platoon leader.

Charlie and Delta finished up this exercise successfully tying in with every other Patriot unit, showing the ability to stand up comprehensive coverage.

"This not only helps the batteries but it helps the battalion [higher echelon of command] to in-place [or set up] and have a complete network across the peninsula to defend from different locations with only one battle management location," said Capt. Chavez.



Members of Charlie Battery launcher platoon try and get some sleep their second night in the field. In the spirit of training like they fight, the unit worked, slept and ate at their tactical site, and they responded to every event even if it ended their sleep periods.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Erien Clark-Chasse

Army Spc. Joshua Klovstand, Delta Battery, covers a vehicle at the wartime location during the site setup. Delta Battery spent more than 25 days living at this location.